

Children's Advocacy Center creates a safe spot for the sexually abused child

The Chicago Children's Advocacy Center looks like a fairy tale cottage, standing apart from the gritty urban buildings on Damen Avenue. The cotton candy colors of the outer walls, whimsical artwork and butterfly-chairs are a welcoming distraction from the harsh reality of the work done inside. All children in Chicago who are victims of or witnesses to sexual abuse can find a safe haven as they receive treatment and other services at the Children's Advocacy Center.

The décor is not the only unique part of the Center. Perhaps more surprising is the collection of individuals gathered under one roof to manage the 2,600 cases of child sexual abuse reported yearly in Chicago. The Chicago Children's Advocacy Center is based on the premise that no one agency or professional can prevent or treat child abuse. The committed staff is joined by a team of health professionals, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, Chicago Police Department and DCFS Child Protection. The Center pulls all the necessary resources together to work as partners so families avoid shuffling between several offices. It also helps the

professionals to work in a coordinated approach that can better meet the child's needs.

If a report of child sexual abuse is made to the DCFS Hotline or through the police, the Children's Advocacy Center is notified. Arrangements are made for the child and a caregiver to come to the Advocacy Center to begin investigating the charge.

From the start of the investigation, every effort is made to make the child feel comfortable. A huge aquarium of playful fish gurgles in the entrance. The playroom is full of toys to fill any wait time and help the child relax. The interview rooms have been set up with a one-way mirror so that all team members can watch the specially-trained interviewer talk with the child privately, without intruding. This also allows the child to tell what happened just one time to minimize the trauma.

If needed, the Center has medical examination rooms where physicians can use new technology to perform noninvasive and child sensitive sexual abuse exams.



Specially designed exam rooms help children be more comfortable.

"It is sad that a place like the Children's Advocacy Center must exist. When sexual abuse occurs, the Center will do the best job of helping children heal physically and emotionally," said Erin Sorenson, Executive Director.

In addition to the investigative purpose, the Center provides supportive and follow up services to children and their families including counseling and other mental health services and referrals to community resources. Staff are specially trained to communicate sensitively with children.

For more information on the Child Advocacy Center, call Donna Hardy or Michele Snyder at 312-492-3700.

Cook Central Regional Advisory Council



Andre
Robinson



Adrienne
Welenc

Cook Central region has selected a new representative to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Andre Robinson has been a licensed foster parent with CARC for two years. He is currently a Systems of Care Clinical Specialist for T.A.S.C., has seven years of social work experience, and a B.A. in Behavioral Science.

Adrienne Welenc is the other Cook Central representative to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. She currently serves the council as chair. The regional representatives are responsible for addressing local issues with the state council and bringing information back to the local council.

The Cook Central Regional Foster Parent Council meets on the last Tuesday of each month starting at 9:30 a.m. at 3518 W. Division. All Cook Central caregivers (DCFS and private agency) are invited to attend. The meetings are informative and interactive. Training credit hours are typically available.

Cook Central packed it in for a successful school year start

The generosity and enthusiastic participation of staff at 3518 W. Division made the Backpacks for Success effort a real success. Through the two donation drives BYOB: Bring Your Own Backpack and BFB: Bucks For Backpacks bottled water sale, staff prepared more than 120 new backpacks filled with supplies. Students headed to school ready with notebooks, filler paper, crayons, folders, glue, pens and pencils. All backpacks and school supplies were 100% purchased or donated by 3518 staff to be distributed to Cook Central children and families in need.

Back in August, the staff had a chance to see the start of school through the eyes of a child through a management memo. The memo read, "Let us join together to contribute to the success of our children. While we have the supplies to go into the backpacks, we don't have the funds to purchase backpacks, so I am asking for help in securing 100 backpacks before school starts in order for our children to begin the first day of school prepared."

The response by staff was immediate. The next day several staff brought in new backpacks. The seed cash to purchase school supplies came from the 3518 Petty Cash Fund. The Petty Cash fund was established last August

through the sale of bottled water. The staff simply places a \$1 per bottle donation in the box on top of the refrigerator on the honor system.

Since the inception, the office has raised hundreds of dollars that have gone to assist children and families. The petty cash has been used in a variety of ways:

- purchasing food for children during a weekend emergency respite situation
- feeding children waiting in the office who have been taken into custody
- buying emergency medical supplies in an emergency situation
- purchasing work-related clothes for a couple of parents to help them towards self-sufficiency
- providing diapers and baby formula
- purchasing cases and cases of school supplies

The donation and supports came from the entire 3518 Division family, representing every level, and every position title. Everyone united cheerfully and enthusiastically contributed to the support of the region's children in their return to school.

Cook Central Regional Administrator



Joyce Hall

It is my pleasure to send the warmest of holiday wishes to the families and staff of Cook Central. Since I became your Regional Administrator, I have

been struck by the overwhelming generosity you show. You show it with your time, your effort and your willingness to go the distance on behalf of a child.

We have come a long way and through many transitions as a region. Through it all, our caregivers have stayed with us and stayed committed to the youth in their care. Going forward into the new year, we will focus on the items and activities we incorporated into the new Implementation Plan. It was refreshing to begin getting to know individual caregivers through their participation with us.

Please be on the look out for more training opportunities to support you in meeting the challenges successfully. We are also hoping to see caregivers get more involved in the Child and Youth Investment Team (CAYIT) meetings. You see first-hand what the needs are. I hope that you will use the CAYIT as a way to be involved in making good decisions at the right time. We, as always, are ready to help. Best wishes for 2006.

Cook Central 2006 Foster Parent Implementation Plan

Cook Central toasted completion of the region's Foster Parent Implementation Plan by inviting the foster parents and staff alike for a cup of coffee. At the final gathering, staff conducted a training on the Foster Parent Law and presented the plan to foster parents for a final review.

Mildred A. Cardona and Mayra Burgos-Biott co-chaired the committee appointed to oversee the review of the plan. They were on the agenda of the Cook Central Foster Parent Advisory Council every month from July to November. Their presentations during these advisory council meetings stressed the importance of inclusion, the need for foster parents to participate in the process and the need for collaboration between foster parents and regional staff.

"One of region's goals is to have the foster parents and staff realize that they need to make their voices heard. In order for us to improve, we need to work together," said Cardona.

As the 2006 Implementation Plan developed, the region saw improvement even in the way the plan came together. Staff made a point of offering many opportunities for input and specific training on the Foster Parent Law. The result was a plan that reflects the needs of the children

and families and outlines how the administration will respond.

The plan was submitted to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, which has the mandate to review and score all implementation plans from the DCFS regions and private agency foster care programs. The Council will announce results in the first quarter.

Cook County Advocate reporters

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

Cook North Regional Administrator

The Cook North staff and administration want to thank all of our foster and adoptive parents, relative caregivers and service providers for all of the loving care that you provide to our children and families throughout the year.



Chris McGrath

This past year has brought about many changes. As our needs of the children in care have changed, we have also made changes in the region. However, we continue to keep our eye on the target of providing excellent service to youth and the families who provide their care.

The region is reshaping the Foster Parent Advisory Council to help you advocate more effectively. I wish to extend a special invitation to you to join us each month. We have been developing more local training opportunities in response to the needs you have brought up. In the coming year, we look forward to working with you and your children. Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season from all of us in the Cook North Region.

Chris McGrath

New Cook North Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Representatives

The Cook North Region conducted interviews for foster parents to represent the region on the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. The new representatives for the region are Mr. Cecil Garner and Ms. Ruth Dominguez. The region would like to thank everyone who expressed an interest in representing the region. All Cook North DCFS and private agency foster parents are invited to attend the regional advisory council meetings the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 10:30 to noon at 1911 S. Indiana.



Cecil Garner

Cecil Garner is licensed as a foster parent with Chicago Commons and is a caseworker with a private agency. He has been licensed since May of 2003 and is caregiver to two boys. Garner regularly attends foster parent meetings and trainings with his agency. He is a volunteer with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and also volunteers over the summer in a Mississippi group home for children with special needs, called Paul's House. He also has been active in working with adolescents in mentoring and coaching life skills.

Garner spoke positively of his experiences as a foster parent, but

also expressed concerns about the need to provide better services to foster parents, address the needs of adolescents and provide more opportunities for our youth and young men. He is enthusiastic about becoming involved in the council and being able to learn more as well as share information with the foster parent community.



*Ruth
Dominguez*

Ruth Dominguez has been licensed with Association House since 2000. Her family has been caring for two siblings with special needs since 2002 and is moving toward adoption. Dominguez is currently employed as a teacher's assistant with the Chicago Public School system. She is very active in her community, having participated on several boards and has acted as a housing advocate.

Dominguez expressed some frustration over her experiences as a foster parent with systemic issues related to permanency, however spoke positively of her family's experiences fostering. She is looking forward to participating on the council and being a voice for foster parents.

Northeast Foster Parent Association and Greek clergy serve 1,500 youth

For the past eight years, the Northeast Foster Parent Association has worked with the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago to assist Santa in providing thousands of Christmas gifts to foster and adoptive children and families. Father Nicholas and Father Andrew, as they are lovingly referred to by the foster and adoptive parents, perform pastoral duties at the St. George Orthodox Church located in Cicero. Father Nicholas is president of the clergy association and Father Andrew is an assistant pastor with St. George. The Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago is a network of 16 Orthodox churches across the Chicagoland area and northwest Indiana.

The Northeast Foster Parent Association was originally contacted after a meeting with Orthodox ministers in the clergy association. The clergy association was looking to unite its ministry to support and provide some type of charitable contribution to less fortunate children and families. What initially started out as a small gift-giving project to provide children and families with Christmas gifts in the spirit of the season has blossomed into an enormous effort, which is coordinated by Father Nicholas, Father Andrew and members of the Northeast Foster Parent Association. This year, the involved churches will

have provided gifts to 1,500 children and families living in Cook County.

The project begins a little earlier every year in order to accommodate its ambitious goals. Identification of Christmas wishes for children and families began this past July. Permanency workers, LAN liaisons, DCP investigators and intact family workers provided lists to the association regarding the Christmas wishes of the children and families on their caseloads. The foster parent association tracks and monitors every request that comes in. "Wish lists" as they have come to be called, are distributed to the various involved congregations with targeted dates for pick-ups and deliveries of the gifts. The amount of effort in coordinating this project is enormous and is truly a team effort. Volunteer semi-truck drivers and various youth groups or youth sport leagues are recruited among the congregations to assist with loading and deliveries of the gifts to the association. Gifts are then distributed to the children and families by caseworkers and members of the foster parent association.

The clergy association wishes that they could provide every child or family in need with gifts. The joy of conjuring up mental pictures of the unknown faces of children as they open their gifts and the joy



Mattie Brown of the Northeast Foster Parent Association presents a token of thanks to Father Sam Sherry of the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association for Association for their long-running partnership to help youth at Christmas.

that they bring, motivates the Orthodox Christian Clergy Association of Greater Chicago and their congregations to continue their efforts to see that all of the wishes are fulfilled and that people should remember the spirit of giving year round.



In November, the reception area of the Jewish Children's Bureau was overflowing with winter coats for foster children. Foster care staff worked with caregivers to determine the needs and preferences for cold weather gear. Then volunteers had the fun of shopping, while filling a need.

Cook South Regional Administrator

I extend the warmest of holiday greetings to you all. The year 2005 was especially momentous, since I had the honor of being appointed as your regional administrator. As wonder-filled a year this has been, I am eager to continue the work in 2006.



Michael Byrd

Our region is blessed with so many dedicated caregivers and committed staff. Your willingness to serve was evidenced in so many ways this year. You door-knocked for back-to-school and marched to prevent child abuse. In May, staff pitched in, and with special assistance from James Bracey, we had a spectacular foster parent appreciation event.

Through the months we also took a close look at the families we serve and the way we serve them. We have made adjustments and will continue to refine ourselves to meet your needs. There will always be room for improvement. However, I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish together.

Every day you keep striving to help children you increase the harvest of joy for this year and sow seeds of hope for the next. Thank you for all you do.

Cook South supports families with groups and dedicated staff ready to help

Harvey Foster Parent Peer Support Group

The Harvey Foster Parent Peer Support group, which is based on the Family to Family model of foster and biological families working together, continues to deal with subjects that support the well-being of children and families. In November, the topic was Special Education: New Laws and How to Access Services. The December meeting on Juvenile Court helped caregivers understand the roles of court professionals and the processes.

The next meeting is set for January 26 and is titled "HELP." If this title sounds intriguing, the group hopes caregivers will come to see what the mystery is about. Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday at the Harvey Office located at 15115 S. Dixie Hwy. from 10 a.m. to noon. You can get additional information about this group by contacting Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3578.

Cook South Foster Parent Support Group

The Cook South Foster Parent Support Group that meets at 6201 S. Emerald has been busy. In September, Donnella Bishop-Ward from DCFS training spoke to the foster parents about the Integrated Assessment Program, which was designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the child and his service needs when

entering DCFS care. She also spoke of the important role that foster parents play in this process.

Marguerite Chapman, Cook South's Literacy Specialist, spoke about getting back to the basics to ensure that children are prepared for learning in the school system. Parents can help young students find success by covering the basics. For example, making sure the child knows how to spell his full name, knows his address and phone number, can say and identify all the letters in the alphabet, can count to 100, and knows the days of the week and months and seasons of the year, can start a student off right.

The Cook South Foster Parent Support Group meets the second Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. at the Emerald office. All foster parents are invited to join in.

Cook South Foster Parent Support Specialists

Eleanor Short, Ida Lopez, and Carole Lukacek are Cook South's foster parent support staff. They are here to assist and support foster parents in resolving issues and assuring the well-being of children. All three women have a wealth of knowledge and experience. You can contact them at 773-371-6119 (Emerald) or 708-210-2833 (Harvey) on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Holiday fun in Chicago

The city of Chicago is buzzing with exciting events during the holiday season and into 2006. Here is a small sample of activities available for families during the winter break and a schedule to help plan for fun next year. For more information call 311 in Chicago or 312-744-4000 outside, or go to the City's website at egov.cityofchicago.org.

GINGERBREAD FANTASY FACTORY December 3-January 8, from 10am to 5pm. Chicago Children's Museum at 700 E. Grand Avenue at Navy Pier 312-527-1000 Admission: \$7 person, \$6 seniors and children

HOLIDAY FLOWER SHOW November 25-January 8 from 9am to 5pm daily, Thursdays until 8pm. Garfield Park Conservatory at 300 N. Central Park Avenue 312-746-5100 Admission: FREE Celebrate the holidays with both the unusual and familiar varieties of Christmas trees and plants. Come in from the cold to see a variety of poinsettias, begonias and other holiday greenery. www.garfieldconservatory.com

HOLIDAY TREES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

November 21-January 6 from 9am to 5pm. County Building at 118 N Clark St, Room 118 312-603-6268 Admission: FREE See more than 80 Christmas trees from around the world on display.

KWANZAA: THE EXHIBITION November 15-January 3 from 10am to 5pm. DuSable Museum of African-American History at 740 E. 56th Place 773-947-0600 Admission: FREE with museum admission; \$3 adults, \$2 seniors and students, \$1 children. This annual exhibition is Chicago's largest Kwanzaa exhibit and highlights paintings, textiles, artifacts and sculptures representing the African Diaspora. A six-foot high Kinara (candle holder) and family vignette emphasize the Nguzo Saba, or seven principles of Kwanzaa. www.dusablemuseum.org

WINTER FLOWER & TRAIN SHOW December 10-January 8, 2006 from 9am to 5pm. Lincoln Park Conservatory at 2391 N. Stockton Drive 312-742-7736 Admission: FREE Several model trains, including an old-fashioned steam engine, freight train and trolley, will wind their way through a tiny village featuring a variety of Chicago landmarks. www.chicagoparkdistrict.com

SOLDIER FIELD SLEDDING HILL December 20-March 1, 2006 from 7am to 11pm. Soldier Field Parkland at 1410 S. Museum Campus Drive Gate 14, 312-235-7000 Admission: FREE This 33-foot tall hill with a slope of 220 feet offers wintertime entertainment and breathtaking views of the city. Note: Only plastic sleds allowed. www.soldierfield.net

CHICAGO CELEBRATES NEW YEAR'S EVE December 31 at 11:40pm. Buckingham Fountain at Congress Parkway and Columbus Drive 312-744-3370 Admission: FREE Ring in the New Year as the City of Chicago lights up a spectacular fireworks show choreographed to music at Buckingham Fountain. www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents

Mayor's Office of Special Events

2006 EVENTS

CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

CHICAGO WINTER DELIGHTS JANUARY 2 - FEBRUARY 28	CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD FESTIVALS MAY - JULY	CHICAGO FARMERS MARKET MAY - NOVEMBER	GREAT CHICAGO PLACES & SPACES MAY 19 - 21	MAYOR DALEY'S KIDS & KITES CHICAGO APRIL 29 / SEPT. 30
BIKE CHICAGO MAY - JULY	TASTE OF CHICAGO JUNE 30 - JULY 9	CHICAGO COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL JULY 1 & 2	CHICAGO RACE TO TASTE JULY 2	CHICAGO GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL JUNE 2 - 4
CHICAGO BLUES FESTIVAL JUNE 8 - 11	MAYOR'S CUP SOCCER TOURNAMENT CHICAGO JULY 22 & 23	CHICAGO VENETIAN NIGHT JULY 29	CHICAGO AIR & WATER SHOW AUGUST 19 & 20	CHICAGO OUTDOOR FILM FESTIVAL JULY 18 - AUGUST 29
CHICAGO JAZZ FESTIVAL AUG. 31 - SEPT. 3	CHICAGO JAZZ FESTIVAL AUG. 31 - SEPT. 3	CHICAGO COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL JULY 1 & 2	CHICAGO BOOK FESTIVAL OCTOBER	CHICAGO GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL JUNE 2 - 4
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Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

COOK NORTH

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk

(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

CHICAGO *Association House*
SPANISH
March 18 & 25 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

CHICAGO *Volunteers of America*
Feb. 18 (Sat) & 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Feb. 25 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Module 6 - Working as a Professional Team Member

(Two 3-hour sessions=6 training hours)

CHICAGO *Ada S. McKinley*
Jan. 18, 23 & 25 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Module 9 - Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family

(Two 3-hour sessions=6 training hours)

CHICAGO *Irish American Center*
Jan. 30 & Feb. 1 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Integrated Assessment Training

COOK NORTH

CHICAGO *Harold Washington College*
Jan. 21 (Sat) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

COOK CENTRAL

CHICAGO *DCFS, 3518 W. Division*
Feb. 14 (Tue)) 6-8 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

CHICAGO *St. Bernard's Hospital*
March 2 (Thu) 6-8 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

Module 10 - Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children and Families

(Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

CHICAGO *LCFS*
Jan. 10, 12, 17, 19 & 24 6:30-9:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

COOK SOUTH

Module 1 - Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk

(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

CHICAGO *Messiah Temple*
Jan. 31, Feb. 1 & 2 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Tue/Wed/Thu)

Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

CHICAGO *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald*
Feb. 28, March 2 & 7 6-9 p.m.
(Tue/Thu) *SPANISH*

Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Sexual Abuse

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

CHICAGO *St. Bernard's Hosp.*
Feb. 7, 9 & 14 (Tue/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

CHICAGO *Jane Addams Hull House*
March 13, 15 & 20 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Mon/Wed)

Non-PRIDE Inservice Training

COOK CENTRAL

Effects of Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence on Children

CHICAGO *DCFS, 3518 W. Division*
Feb. 22 (Wed) 6-9 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

Special Education and 2004 IDEA Updates

CHICAGO *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald Ave.*
Feb. 2 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

COOK NORTH

Irish American Heritage Center
Jan. 7 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Kaleidoscope, Inc.
Feb. 21 & 23 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

Association House - SPANISH
Feb. 18 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sequin Services
Feb. 13 & 15 (Mon/Wed) 5:30-8:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald
Jan. 7 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Jan. 23 & 25 (Mon/Wed) 6:30 -9:30 p.m.
March 4 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

FORUM
March 2 & 7 (Tue/Thu) 6-9 p.m.

Lutheran Social Services
Jan. 14 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

DCFS Harvey Area Office
Feb. 4 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Illinois Mentor, Matteson
Feb. 18 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

All classes are coordinated by Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Call 312-553-5821 or -3031 to register.